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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 206th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 25 May 1994, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. CISSE

(Senegal)

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This record is subject to correction.

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Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

1. The CHAIRMAN said that in the previous few weeks important political developments had taken place between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). On 29 April 1994, a Protocol on Economic Relations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization concerning future relations with the Palestinian Authority had been signed in Paris. On 2 May 1994, a Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of a Temporary International Presence in Hebron had been agreed on by Israel and the PLO at Copenhagen. Pursuant to that Memorandum, the first contingent of observers had been deployed in early May.
2. On 4 May 1994, at Cairo, Israel and the PLO had signed an important Agreement for the withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area and for the transfer of authority to the PLO. Subsequently, Israeli troops had withdrawn from the areas indicated in the Agreement, which they had occupied for 27 years, and had turned over authority to Palestinian representatives.
3. While those important developments gave renewed cause for hope for the future, the situation in the occupied territories remained tense and continuing violence had resulted in loss of life on both sides. The Committee hoped to see an end to the violence and the continuation of bilateral negotiations between Israel and the PLO aimed at fully implementing the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and it would therefore continue to monitor the situation.
4. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that a number of important developments had recently taken place with regard to the occupied territories. On 4 May, Israel and the PLO, with the participation of the United States and the Russian Federation as co-sponsors of the Peace Conference on the Middle East, and of Egypt as the host country, had signed an agreement for Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area. That agreement was the first to be implemented under the Declaration of Principles.
5. Implementation by both parties had proceeded reasonably well. After 27 years of continuous occupation, Israel had withdrawn from important areas of Palestinian territory where Palestinian policemen had assumed policing responsibilities. An agreement concerning the temporary presence of international monitors in Hebron had also been implemented.
6. Those developments augured well for the future. Currently, the main task was for the two parties to resume negotiations aimed at implementing the second part of the Declaration of Principles and extending self-rule to the rest of the West Bank.

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

7. Unfortunately, a number of threats to the peace process still remained, including the actions of Israeli settlers in Palestinian territories and the measures adopted by Israel to deny access to Jerusalem. Although it had been agreed that negotiations on the status of Jerusalem should take place during the second stage of implementation of the Declaration of Principles, Jerusalem, an important Muslim cultural and religious centre, must remain open to Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. The closure of the Gaza Strip even to the local Palestinian population was another measure by Israel which was not helpful to the peace process. The international community must therefore continue to press for the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles by the two parties in a spirit of goodwill. It must also provide material support for early reconstruction in the Palestinian territories. He wished to thank donor countries and international organizations, in particular the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), for their pledges of assistance.

8. The Palestinian people had taken their first step towards the building of an independent Palestinian State and the exercise of their legitimate rights, which had long received the support of the international community, the United Nations and the Committee. Currently, continued support was more necessary than ever. In that connection, the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories to coordinate the programmes of the various United Nations agencies operating there was a significant and welcome development. The recent agreement between the PLO and UNDP concerning the latter's work in the occupied territories was another important development and marked the first time that an agreement of that nature had been signed by the PLO and a United Nations agency.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE CONFERENCE ON "PROSPECTS FOR AN ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE", HELD FROM 3 TO 7 MAY 1994, IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

9. The CHAIRMAN, reporting on the Conference on "Prospects for an Arab-Israeli Peace", held from 3 to 7 May 1994, in the United Kingdom, said that the Conference had been attended by 60 participants representing 20 nationalities and a wide cross-section of opinions. Representatives of Israel had included the Israeli Ambassador to the United Kingdom and the Consul-General of Israel in New York, while the PLO representatives had included the special adviser to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO. The Conference had discussed, inter alia, the political, economic, security, and cooperation aspects of the situation in the Middle East.

10. Commenting on the peace process, a participant from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom had noted that the process had greatly benefited from the cooperation between the United States and the Russian Federation. The PLO had accepted the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area as a minimum on which to build; that minimum would probably not be called in question by any party, and it was unlikely that, with the prospect of gaining power at some future stage, Hamas would challenge it. Peace between Israel and Syria was also possible, since Israel was ready to make concessions on the Golan. The same was true with regard to the situation in Lebanon. As for the Palestinian track, the outlook for the new Palestinian administration

(The Chairman)

was generally favourable. Note had been taken of the stated willingness of the Israeli President to dismantle some Israeli settlements, including settlements on the Golan, while the problem of Israelis living in Jerusalem would be examined at a later stage. Although the United Kingdom had played a relatively minor role in the bilateral negotiations, it had always sought to bring the two parties together and to encourage trade rather than aid in the region. It intended to provide assistance to the autonomous Palestinian territory for the establishment of an administration which could take over some of the programmes for which UNRWA was currently responsible. The Bank of England was also ready to provide support for the development of trade in ways consistent with the Protocol on Economic Relations which had been signed by the two parties on 29 April 1994.

11. Reviewing the progress of multilateral negotiations, a participant from the London University of Reading had said that multilateral negotiations were not simply one negotiating track within the general framework of bilateral negotiations, although the latter received more publicity and were better understood by the public. Multilateral negotiations were designed to act as a catalyst and a confidence-building mechanism for Arabs and Israelis. The multilateral meetings examined such important technical issues as water resources, refugees, arms control, regional security, the environment and regional economic development. Those negotiations, which were less subject to the pressures of public opinion, had already laid the bases for future regional cooperation for economic development and had enabled the bilateral negotiations to take place in a climate of greater trust.

12. Some participants had noted that the Palestinians, whose priority goal was to establish an independent State, had not been very active in all of the multilateral negotiations. It had also been felt that the working group on refugees should consider Palestinian refugees throughout the world and not only those in the Middle East. Lastly, it had been generally agreed that the negotiations had struck an important psychological blow against the barriers which existed between Arabs and Palestinians.

13. Examining ways in which principles could be transformed into realities, the Ambassador of Israel to London had said that the Agreement between Israel and the PLO was an important step towards the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Numerous but unsuccessful attempts had been made to interrupt the peace process and the bilateral negotiations had been long and difficult. Although the situation was currently somewhat clearer, the peace process with Syria would be a long one. On the other hand, the conflict with Jordan was of a more limited nature. In Lebanon, Israel had no territorial ambitions and was concerned only with its security. In that connection, a favourable outcome of the negotiations with Syria should have a positive effect. The Israeli Ambassador had also expressed the belief that, given the relaxation of tensions between Israel and the Arab countries, the Arab boycott should be lifted.

14. In the ensuing discussion, a number of participants expressed the view that the benefits from the peace process were not yet substantial enough to justify a lifting of the boycott. Participants had also acknowledged that the Palestinian administration's authority would be strengthened as the people realized the

(The Chairman)

advantages of autonomy and that the decision under the Declaration of Principles to consider the emotionally charged issue of Jerusalem much later was a sound one.

15. The issue of regional economic development had been introduced by an assistant to the Governor of the Central Bank of Jordan, who had noted that investment was the key to economic development. The region's economic development would also benefit greatly from the introduction of structural adjustment measures, a reduction in military expenditures, a substantial expansion in intraregional trade, an increase in the net inflow of fresh capital and regional cooperation in the form of integrated regional projects. Development was an efficient means of reducing population growth and sound economic reform coupled with reliable external partners could contribute to promoting peace in the region.

16. In the ensuing discussions, participants had noted that countries of the Middle East had complementary economic potential which could be harnessed through cooperation and that durable peace could spark rapid development.

17. Examining the role that international organizations could play by investing in peace, a World Bank representative had stressed the need for donor countries to translate their declarations of intent into tangible contributions. As many projects, including the Emergency Assistance Programme, had not been implemented because of the financing problem, Palestinian leaders should try to avoid the bilateral approach and cooperate instead with the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations present in the region.

18. In the ensuing discussion, participants had pointed out the urgent need to take into account the expected increase in the populations of the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area. They had also noted the absolute need for bilateral assistance.

19. The Director of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding had introduced the topic of Europe's role in the promotion of peace. He had expressed the view that while Europe's position on the Arab-Israeli conflict was somewhat ambiguous, it should not try to impose its solution on the Arabs but should rather provide them with the economic, training, investment and trade assistance they required.

20. Introducing the topic of the peace process and Israel's security, the Director of the Resa Center for Strategic Studies of Bar-Ilan University of Tel Aviv had suggested that as Arab-Israeli relations were often marked by the use of force and popular support for radicalism, the achievements of the peace process might not be irreversible. Since Israel's primary concern was for its own security, it should therefore not withdraw from the territory along the banks of the Jordan River and from the Golan Heights. While Israel could project an image of peace, it should not abandon its nuclear option, since some countries in the region had their own nuclear option. Although Israel should continue to negotiate, it should do so with appropriate caution.

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(The Chairman)

21. Commenting on the same topic, the Consul-General of Israel in New York had said that security should include economic security and that the time element was vital in order to establish lasting peace. The Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area could work despite the risks of terrorist attacks. The Middle East was a highly volatile region where the solution to problems must be envisaged on a step-by-step basis.

22. In the ensuing discussion, most participants had agreed that a political rather than a military solution had a greater chance of prevailing. The idea of strategic settlements had come under heavy criticism as it was felt that civilian settlers would not win a war. Some had felt that the arms race was a waste of money, as very few countries in the region would be able to stop external aggression.

23. Speaking on the institutional framework for autonomy, elections and the Palestinian Council, the Special Adviser to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO had noted that the recently established Palestinian Authority comprised 24 members, 12 from the occupied territories and 12 from abroad. The recently created electoral system should be used to organize the elections scheduled to be held nine months after the transfer of power. Concerning economic issues, a Reconstruction and Development Commission had been established under the guidance of a 14-member Board of Governors. The Palestinian leaders were committed to respecting human rights.

24. In the ensuing discussion, it had been noted that although the Palestinians living in Jerusalem could vote they could not be elected and that the elected members of the Palestinian Authority would negotiate the Final Agreement. The Israeli settlers who remained in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area after the Israeli withdrawal could either leave the territories, request Palestinian citizenship or remain as foreigners.

25. The Israeli viewpoint on internal and external reactions to the agreements had been presented by a professor of the University of Haifa, who had noted that public opinion in Israel was evolving faster than political parties and the Government. Some indicators shed considerable light on the political psychology of Israelis; 85 per cent of the population had admitted that it had fears. The public at large seemed to be against the consideration of the issue of Jerusalem, while nearly half of the population was against the restoration of the Golan Heights to Syria.

26. Speaking on the same issue from a Palestinian perspective, a research associate of the Centre of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, in London, had noted that the crux of the issue was that while Palestinians wanted a State the Israelis were not willing to entertain such a notion. However, there were contradictions within both camps.

27. In the ensuing discussion, participants noted that the reasons for the establishment of Israeli settlements were biblical, ideological and practical and that political compromise was necessary for the peace process to continue.

(The Chairman)

28. The discussions on the creation of a Palestinian State had been introduced by two speakers, one from the Royal Institute of International Affairs and the other from King's College, University of London. The first speaker had envisaged three scenarios: an independent Palestinian State, politically confederated with Jordan and having economic ties with Israel; a politically independent State confederated with Israel with economic ties to Jordan; and an independent and sovereign State without any confederal ties with either Israel or Jordan. According to the second speaker, a point of no-return having been reached, the creation of a Palestinian State was inevitable.

29. Participants had expressed the fear that the establishment of a Greater Jordan or Greater Palestine might foster the idea of a greater Syria and that changes in the Israeli Government might have an adverse impact on the peace process. It had also been noted that the PLO would be responsible for the Palestinian diplomatic missions throughout the world and for conducting the international relations of the new Palestinian Authority. While the offices opened in Jericho by foreign countries would not be considered as diplomatic missions, the Palestinian Authority would nevertheless be able to sign economic and cultural agreements and negotiate arrangements with donor countries.

30. Commenting on the future role of the United States in the Middle East, a research associate of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London had noted that the main thrust of United States policy in the Middle East was to marginalize opponents to the peace process in order to promote a dialogue between Arabs and Israelis and to keep to a minimum the action of countries hostile to that process. Some countries of the region that received conventional weapons from the United States did not necessarily have a high combat readiness as too many weapons rusted in the desert sands.

31. Speaking on the related topic of developments in Arab-Israeli relations, the Consul-General of Israel in New York had said that such relations had been conducted in two phases, bilaterally and through third parties. Having failed to rally the Arabs to the Western camp, the United States had improved its ties with Israel while the traditional alliance of Arabs against Jews had been destroyed following the rapprochement between Egypt and Israel. Unlike the Arab countries, Israel devoted the bulk of United States economic and military assistance to the purchase of United States products. The peace process had drawn the two countries closer together and the United States would continue to play a key role in the quest for peace.

32. In the course of the following discussions, some participants had expressed regret that as a result of its massive assistance to Israel, the United States had reduced its assistance to other developing countries. It had also been suggested that the United States was currently seeking peace in the region because it felt that Israel no longer had real strategic value.

33. A speaker from the Australian National University, commenting on peace and cooperation and security in the Middle East, had said that the process of peace with Israel represented the start of normalization for many Arab countries. There was a lack of cohesion among intellectuals, leaders and the people in Arab societies in terms of how to deal with Israel. Personal contacts among

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(The Chairman)

political leaders were essential in that context to promote security, which should be further buttressed by a multilateral framework.

34. A speaker from the Jewish Chronicle had referred to the tendency in the Middle East to conclude agreements that were not subsequently implemented. The United Nations must become more engaged in regional security on an ongoing basis and efforts must be made to establish a new political culture to put an end to the traditional mutual hatred of Arabs and Israelis.

35. In conclusion, the Conference had noted the improvement in the living conditions of Palestinians, the risks borne by regional political leaders in the peace process, the transitional nature of the current period, and the need to discard prejudices and work together towards peace.

36. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan) thanked the Chairman for his report. The frank and open discussion which had evidently taken place at the Conference could not have been held before the recent improvements in the political climate.

UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON PALESTINIAN TRADE AND INVESTMENT NEEDS, UNESCO HEADQUARTERS, PARIS, 20 TO 22 JUNE 1994

37. The CHAIRMAN said that a United Nations seminar on Palestinian trade and investment needs was to be held at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, from 20 to 22 June 1994, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/213. The seminar would provide an opportunity to contribute to Palestinian development and institution-building during the transitional period as an essential component of a just and lasting peace. Donor countries, United Nations agencies, experts in economic development and non-governmental organizations were expected to participate.

38. The provisional programme for the seminar had been circulated in working paper No. 3. He would take it that the Committee wished to approve the working paper.

39. It was so decided.

40. The CHAIRMAN said that the composition of the Committee delegation to the seminar would be finalized in due course, but would include the Chairman, the Rapporteur, and the Permanent Observer for Palestine.

NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, TORONTO, CANADA, 6 TO 8 JULY 1994

41. The CHAIRMAN noted that the Government of Canada had agreed to host the North American Symposium on the Question of Palestine in Toronto from 6 to 8 July 1994. He expressed the Committee's appreciation. The programme for the Symposium had already been approved by the Committee and preparations were proceeding.

DRAFT REVISED CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION OF NGOS

42. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the draft revised criteria for accreditation of NGOs. The draft revised criteria had been devised by the Bureau in the light of recent developments in the peace process and a desire to expand NGO participation in the work of the Committee. The criteria would continue to be accompanied by an information questionnaire, which would be reviewed to tie in with the electronic information system.

43. He would take it that the Committee wished to approve the draft revised criteria for the accreditation of NGOs.

44. It was so decided.

APPLICATIONS OF NEW NGOS

45. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to working paper No. 4, containing applications by NGOs wishing to participate in the work of the Committee. The organizations in question had been recommended by their respective regional coordinating committees.

46. He would take it that the Committee wished to approve the applications.

47. It was so decided.

48. The CHAIRMAN said that all future applications would be handled under the new criteria.

OTHER MATTERS

49. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the Government of Brazil had agreed to host a seminar and NGO symposium on the question of Palestine for the Latin American and Caribbean region in July or August 1994. Details would be provided in due course.

50. Mr. CHINYOY (India) welcomed the positive note struck by the Chairman, and trusted that it presaged a just and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine. In that connection he welcomed the conclusion of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area. The main task was the social and economic development of the Palestinian people, in which connection India would continue to provide support for the movement towards self-rule and self-government.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.



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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 207th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 27 July 1994, at 3.30 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. CISSE

(Senegal)

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UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING AND EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, GENEVA, 29 AUGUST TO 1 SEPTEMBER 1994

OTHER MATTERS

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The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

2. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that on 4 May 1994 in Cairo, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had signed an agreement concerning Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area and the transfer of jurisdiction over them to the PLO. On 1 July 1994, Yasser Arafat had visited those areas and had decided to establish his permanent residence in the Gaza Strip. The enthusiasm with which he had been greeted was a sign of popular support for the peace process.

3. Effective 1 June 1994, the Secretary-General had named an Under-Secretary-General to serve as Special Coordinator in the occupied territory. The Special Coordinator would remain in constant contact with the specialized agencies, the World Bank, non-governmental organizations and the donor community.

4. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Permanent Observer for Palestine) said that the agreement between the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the Government of Israel had been smoothly implemented. The Palestinian police force was successfully established, and the Palestinian authority was functioning normally and daily increasing its activity. Nevertheless, some points would require further negotiation, including the demarcation of the Jericho Area, the stationing of Palestinian police on the bridge on the road from Jericho to Jordan, and the status of Palestinian detainees, most of whom remained in prison. The most important tasks were to move as quickly as possible towards negotiation of a second implementation agreement to extend self-government to the rest of the West Bank and to reach agreement regarding the holding of a general election with the participation of the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem.

5. Unfortunately, the 4 May Declaration of Principles had not been fully implemented. Elections were to have taken place in July but, because of a dispute regarding the Jericho Area, that had not been possible. In addition, Israel had failed to relinquish its authority in certain spheres agreed on in the Declaration of Principles, although that authority was to have been assumed by the Palestinians simultaneously with their assumption of authority in Gaza and Jericho. Nevertheless, he expected fruitful negotiations on the subject of a second implementation agreement.

6. Another important issue concerned the assistance which the international community, and especially the donor community, had promised to Palestine. Pledges had been made in the amount of \$2.4 billion over a five-year period, of which \$1.2 billion was to have been spent in the first three-year period. But while that assistance reflected the commitment of the international community to helping Palestine build its authority as a means to building its State, the promised assistance had been less forthcoming than had been hoped. Although

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

some lacked confidence in the Palestinians' readiness for self-government, his delegation believed that Palestine was indeed ready, and that the World Bank and the international community could have done more to improve the situation. Since it was, after all, a matter of voluntary assistance, no blame was attached to that failure. But the issue was an important one, especially in the Gaza Strip, where unemployment had reached 40 to 45 per cent and the occupying Power had completely destroyed the local infrastructure. The Palestinian people were optimistic about the peace agreement and were enjoying the fruits of the new situation, especially where security was concerned, but they had as yet seen no improvement in their economic situation. His delegation hoped that donor countries would accelerate the assistance process.

7. The United Nations had made significant contributions to the situation in Palestine. The Secretary-General had called for an inter-agency meeting to achieve maximum coordination among concerned United Nations agencies and had appointed a Special Coordinator of United Nations activities in the occupied territory, Ambassador Roed Terje Larsen of Norway. But the activity of the United Nations and the Special Coordinator should not be limited to Gaza and Jericho, or even to the West Bank and Gaza, but should be extended to the entire occupied territory, and the United Nations should be bound by the clear political position adopted on the issue by the Security Council and the General Assembly. His delegation welcomed the Washington Declaration which had recently been concluded between Jordan and Israel and hoped that it would lead to further progress towards agreements between Israel and the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. However, his delegation had strong reservations regarding section B (3) of the Washington Declaration. Jerusalem remained an integral part of the occupied territory, as repeatedly affirmed by the Security Council and the General Assembly. He thanked the Chairman and the Committee for their support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people and expressed his appreciation of the Governments who had aided the activities of the Committee, particularly Canada, which had hosted the last meeting of non-governmental organizations in North America.

8. The CHAIRMAN expressed his hope that the international community, especially the donor countries, would furnish the aid which they had promised to the development effort in the occupied territories, Gaza and Jericho, and that the Washington Declaration would be a key step towards peace in the Middle East.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES, THE MEETINGS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY, THE UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON PALESTINIAN TRADE AND INVESTMENT NEEDS AND THE NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

9. The CHAIRMAN said that he had participated in the Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries in Cairo from 31 May to 3 June 1994. The question of Palestine was always on the agenda of the ministerial conferences, in which the PLO also participated, and the Non-Aligned Movement had created a special committee for the question of Palestine. He drew attention to the final documents of the Ministerial Conference, in which the Ministers renewed their support for the peace process in Palestine and expressed their belief that significant progress had been made.

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(The Chairman)

10. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) had met from 13 to 15 June 1994 in Tunis. OAU, which had been founded in 1963 as a result of the liberation struggles in Africa, had always supported the cause of liberation in other countries, including Palestine. He drew attention to the final documents of the meeting, which reaffirmed the support of OAU for the Palestinian people, and the PLO as its only representative, on all the points mentioned in previous OAU resolutions. OAU had recognized the progress achieved in the peace process, particularly the Washington Declaration, and had requested that international organizations should support the Washington Declaration, the Cairo Agreement, and the Palestinian people.

11. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 48/158 A and 48/213, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People had convened the United Nations Seminar on Palestinian Trade and Investment Needs, which had met in Paris from 20 to 22 June 1994.

12. The seminar, which had been attended by Palestinian, Israeli and other experts and by representatives of donor countries, United Nations bodies and agencies already involved in projects in the occupied Palestinian territories, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations active in providing assistance to the Palestinian people and the United Nations bodies and agencies concerned had provided a forum for exchanging views on various aspects of Palestinian needs in the fields of trade and investment and sharing the experience gained by sectors of the international community in that respect. A total of six meetings had been held at which 16 experts had presented papers on different aspects of the issue, and representatives of 13 Governments and agencies had made keynote statements during the deliberations. The seminar had opened with a plenary session on the theme "Building a Palestinian economy - challenges and prospects" followed by three round-table discussions on the themes "Laying the foundation for Palestinian economic development", "Investment for development: Palestinian needs and policy options" and "Trade for development: Palestinian needs and policy options" respectively. The Committee's delegation welcomed the commitments of the donor community at the Conference to Support Middle East Peace and its readiness to provide Palestinians with the assistance they needed at that crucial juncture of their history.

13. The Eleventh United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, on the theme "Palestine - Towards a just and lasting peace; Focus on mobilizing NGO support for cooperation and development", had been held from 6 to 8 July 1994 under the auspices of the Committee in Toronto, Canada, with the active participation of the Canadian Government. It had been attended by over 200 participants representing 58 non-governmental organizations. Fifteen Governments had sent observers. Experts from North America, Palestine and Israel had presented papers at the four plenary meetings on the reconstruction and nation-building process during the transition period in the light of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Six workshops had also been held on, inter alia, relevant issues of economic development, defending human rights and the experience of Palestinian women in development. The discussions had served as an occasion for the North American NGO community to coordinate, intensify and diversify its efforts and activities

(The Chairman)

and thus increase its support for and assistance to the Palestinian people in the political, social and economic spheres or in the various phases of building necessary infrastructure. The Symposium had helped to develop cooperation between Canadian non-governmental organizations involved in the issue and the Canadian Government which was particularly crucial for future action aimed at finding a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. The North American NGOs had decided, in order to ensure continuity throughout the year, to maintain the practice they had adopted during the previous year's Symposium by establishing standing committees in areas of particular interest to them, such as mass media, human rights, economic development, religious groups and women, and project execution. They had renewed their commitment to the goals of the United Nations, in particular those of the Committee, to support the ongoing peace process.

14. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Permanent Observer for Palestine) drew the Committee's attention to the unanimous adoption by the Economic and Social Council of a resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people, paragraph 9 of which authorized the convening in 1995 of a United Nations-sponsored seminar on Palestinian administrative, managerial and financial needs and challenges in light of the new developments. He also drew attention to a draft resolution currently being considered by the Economic and Social Council concerning the Middle East peace process. While his delegation did not have any objection to the draft resolution, it felt that the Council was not the appropriate forum for such a resolution, given its purely political nature.

15. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the representative of Senegal, said that paragraph 9 of the resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people indeed gave the Committee the option of holding a seminar on economic questions. Concerning the resolution on the Middle East peace process, his delegation had taken note of the fact that the Palestine Liberation Organization delegation had no objection to it.

UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING AND EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, GENEVA, 29 AUGUST TO 1 SEPTEMBER 1994

16. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would be informed as soon as the final arrangements for the combined United Nations International NGO Meeting and European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine had been made.

OTHER MATTERS

17. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the seminar and NGO symposium for the Latin American and Caribbean region, which was to have been convened in Brasilia, had been postponed. However, the Government of Brazil had agreed to the holding of the seminar and NGO symposium during the first quarter of 1995 at either Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo.

18. Mr. TLILI (Department of Public Information), introducing a new publication of the Department on the question of Palestine entitled "Promoting a culture for peace in the Middle East", said that it reflected the proceedings of the International Encounter for European Journalists on the Question of Palestine

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(Mr. Tlili)

organized by his Department from 9 to 11 June 1993 in London. Representatives of the European, Palestinian and Israeli media, as well as foreign journalists based in London and members of the diplomatic corps, had participated in the Encounter. While various aspects of the publication indicated clearly that the Encounter had taken place before the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, the substance of the debate had gone beyond the particulars of those arrangements and had focused on the underlying assumption that a true and lasting peace also required a culture for peace which involved a comprehensive, society-wide system of values that would lead citizens of the Middle East not only to put a premium on but also to stand for peace.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.



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RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 208th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 23 September 1994, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. Cisse

(Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE COMBINED UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING AND EUROPEAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

2. The CHAIRMAN said that, for the first time the meeting of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and European NGOs had been combined. Accordingly, the United Nations International NGO Meeting and the European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine had been held at Geneva from 29 August to 1 September 1994. He had been head of the Committee's delegation, which had also included Mr. Farhadi, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Cassar, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations and Rapporteur of the Committee, and Mr. Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations.

3. The theme of the Meeting had been "Building on the Declaration of Principles towards the Independent Palestinian State". Participants had included representatives of 100 non-governmental organizations (including 83 accredited with the Committee) and 15 observers, 30 Governments, 8 United Nations agencies and bodies, 4 intergovernmental organizations, 5 NGO coordinating committees, a Palestinian delegation and 27 experts and workshop leaders. He had addressed the opening session of the Meeting on behalf of the Committee. In addition, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights had read out a message on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Senior Political Adviser on International Organizations to the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had read out a statement on behalf of Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee. Statements had also been made by the Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine and by the Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOS on the Question of Palestine.

4. The Meeting had featured six round tables, three workshops and a number of audiovisual presentations. Panels had focused on inter alia, "Implementation of the Declaration of Principles", "Elements of the Final Settlement", "Jerusalem, Refugees and Settlements", "Role of the Israeli Peace Forces in Support of the Palestinian People", "Arab Societies in the Middle East and the Declaration of Principles", and "The Role of NGOs in the Social and Economic Development of Palestine". The presentations had been followed by lively, frank exchanges on the outlook for the peace process, the challenges to be faced, evolving political positions and opportunities for future action by the international NGO community. The Committee's delegation had stressed the continued importance of NGO solidarity and the need to involve new groups which were active in development and humanitarian issues.

5. The Meeting had adopted a communiqué, copies of which had been distributed to Committee members. The communiqué noted that the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements had opened a new chapter in Middle East relations and constituted the first step towards a just and lasting peace. It

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(The Chairman)

reaffirmed support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions. It stated that the United Nations should continue to seek a negotiated settlement of the question of Palestine and was the most appropriate body for guaranteeing a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. It also invited Israel, the occupying Power, to respect the Geneva Conventions, until such time as the Palestinian people achieved sovereignty. It expressed concern at the continued Israeli incarceration of political prisoners and other Palestinians and called on Israel to release them unconditionally, in accordance with the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, signed at Cairo on 4 May 1994. Referring to a number of regional meetings organized in the occupied territories by the Geneva Conference Working Group in preparation for the Geneva meeting, the communiqué indicated that such efforts would continue. It also stated that while the role traditionally played by NGOs under occupation would continue, they would also seek ways to increase the involvement of NGOs, particularly those concerned with economic and social development and humanitarian service. The NGOs looked forward to cooperating with the Palestinian authorities. Lastly, the communiqué expressed appreciation to the Committee and to the Division for Palestinian Rights and requested assistance to NGOs in obtaining access to other United Nations bodies and the specialized agencies and in identifying United Nations programmes and resources that could help them to achieve their objectives.

6. The Committee delegation had also held consultations with representatives of the NGO coordinating committees with a view to streamlining NGO activities sponsored by the Committee in order to make them more cost-effective and focused. A number of approaches to NGO cooperation with the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights had also been discussed. In particular, it was agreed that a task force for cooperation with the Committee and the Division would be appointed from within the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine in order to facilitate the substantive preparation of future international NGO meetings. The task force would be composed of seven to nine members.

7. If there were no comments, he would take it that the Committee wished to take note of the communiqué adopted by the combined International NGO Meeting and European NGO Symposium.

8. It was so decided.

REVIEW OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE AND
CONSULTATIONS REGARDING THE FORTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

9. The CHAIRMAN said that the meeting was taking place shortly after the first anniversary of the historic Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed at Washington, D.C., on 13 September 1993. He wished to express the Committee's appreciation for the positive efforts made by the parties since that time to proceed with the practical implementation of the Declaration. Since the last meeting of the Committee, held at the end of July, a further agreement had been reached between Israel and the PLO regarding the West Bank, granting power and responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority and its Civil Administration in a number of functional areas, including education

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(The Chairman)

and culture, health, social welfare, tourism and taxation. The parties had also undertaken to explore the possibility of extending the transfer of power and responsibilities to other spheres. That was indeed another significant step towards the achievement of Palestinian sovereignty and it was to be hoped that it would soon be followed by the further withdrawal of Israeli troops.

10. The serious problems faced by the Palestinian Authority in developing the Palestinian economy, an essential foundation of peace, and the urgent need to mobilize international assistance to that end, continued to be matters of grave concern. In that connection, the Committee had welcomed the Oslo Declaration adopted at the meeting between Chairman Arafat and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Israel and Norway on 13 September. It was the Committee's understanding that an informal emergency meeting would be convened at the earliest possible date, which would be guided by a number of principles and needs agreed on in Oslo. He expressed the hope that the ongoing efforts to generate the needed assistance would be productive.

11. He wished to reaffirm the Committee's readiness to contribute to international endeavours for the successful outcome of the peace process and in support of the Palestinian people until such time as a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement was achieved.

12. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) welcomed the positive results of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, which had proved the correctness of a balanced and reasonable approach. It would be important to build on the outcome of the forty-eighth session, while maintaining that same approach. The General Assembly should support the Middle East peace process and the implementation of the agreements reached in that context. Further changes in General Assembly resolutions, which were both desirable and necessary, must continue to correspond to the realities of the situation. They must also be implemented by both sides, not just one, and they must not undermine positions of principle embodied in international law.

13. Important positive developments in the peace process must continue to be welcomed and supported and a new atmosphere at the United Nations should continue to be created. While General Assembly resolutions should reflect those developments, they represented but the first step in the transitional period and negotiation of final-status issues would not begin until the second stage. In the meantime, Israel remained an occupying Power and many violations and oppressive measures against the Palestinian people continued. What was more, the Palestinian people in almost all of the West Bank, including Jerusalem, remained under occupation and were denied their inalienable rights. The international community could not afford to see only a one side of the situation.

14. During the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the Palestinian and Arab side had initiated many positive changes. There was a need for positive change on the other side, basically the United States of America and Israel. For example, in the light of the mutual recognition between the Government of Israel and the PLO and the agreements which had been reached, it was high time for those who had not yet done so to recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination as a matter of principle in a current

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer for Palestine)

United Nations resolution. That right could be exercised as part of the current peace process and its recognition would not prevent any party from advancing its own position concerning the outcome of the peace process. There was also a need for Israel to recognize the *de iure* applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention, which would do much to build confidence. Action must also be taken on the General Assembly resolutions concerning the status and rights of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations. Failure to implement those resolutions was, in part, the result of pressure from certain influential Member States.

15. The other side must accept the principle that the United Nations remained responsible for the question of Palestine until it was effectively resolved. The Organization's legal, political and moral responsibility had begun with the partition of mandated Palestine by the General Assembly and had continued with every resolution it adopted. Accordingly, mechanisms established by the General Assembly in keeping with that responsibility, including committees should be accepted in principle and maintained until their mandate was fulfilled.

16. He wished to stress the importance of the full involvement of the United Nations in the peace process. Despite welcome progress made in that regard, there was a need for broader acceptance of the United Nations so that it could play its natural role in the historic search for peace in the Middle East.

17. In keeping with its responsibility to uphold the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international humanitarian law and the validity of Security Council resolutions, the General Assembly must uphold its position concerning the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, especially the right to self-determination. It should also maintain its positions on final-status issues. In that connection, Israel had already created illegal, *de facto* situations, such as illegal settlements, which were no less illegal with the beginning of negotiations. Nor had Israel, the occupying Power, renounced its positions on final-status issues, such as the issue of Jerusalem, pending the results of the negotiations. Israel acted on the basis of those positions and it even continued to aggravate the illegality of the situation. Thus, the call by Israel or any other party for the Palestinian side and/or the international community to renounce their positions was inappropriate and should not be accepted. In conclusion, he hoped that the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly would see the adoption of more effective resolutions which enjoyed a broader consensus but which also remained true to the principles he had outlined.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.